

Southeast News

a publication of the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

Spring '98

Part of the Family

One of the great joys of my work with the Southeast Conference is that I have the opportunity to travel often and meet a variety of people. In January, I led a women's retreat at Plymouth Congregational Church in Charleston, SC. Members of Plymouth, Circular Congregational, and First Congregational Church of Savannah attended, as well as a few sisters from an AME Church who heard of the event.

As our day together began, I couldn't keep from smiling at the diversity of women gathered in that place. We started with Eve and worked our way through scripture to the "woman clothed with the sun" in Revelation 12, offering personal reflections and sharing our faith. We ended our time with a ritual of naming women who had strengthened us or who stood in need of our prayers, bound together by an anointing of joy and tears.

February took me to Tennessee. I enjoyed a heart-warming weekend at Pleasant Hill, reveling in the wisdom of dedicated folks with decades of experience as pastors, missionaries, and lay leaders. Two weeks later, I was at Fall Creek Falls State Park, leading a spiritual renewal retreat for members of Chattanooga's Pilgrim Congregational Church and Crossville United Christian Church. While Pilgrim is welcoming new members, Crossville is mourning an experience of worship that no longer continues.

Life is like this. Beginnings and endings, sorrows and joys—tenderly living out in a church family that is rich in a diversity of life experiences. I'm glad to be part of this family. I look forward to a visit to Alabama next month and to all the opportunities that lie ahead.

— Joyce Hollyday Conference Associate

Inside . . .

- · Annual Meeting info and reservations
- Conference news and opportunities
- · Mission updates. . . and more!

Crisis Response Team Trains

Over the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend, more than 30 people from the Southeast and Florida Conferences gathered at Simpsonwood Retreat Center outside Atlanta to learn about a problem that has haunted the church for many years: clergy misconduct, particularly sexual harassment and abuse.



Pictured from left to right: James Myers, Peggy Muenstermann, Dorothy Gager (barely visible), Bob McMath, Jim Norris, Sandye Mullins, Jimmy Fields, Wade Washburn, Cheri Lovell, Tim Downs, Dick Braun, Holly Nelson, Dan Sack, Tim Morrison, Joan Harrison, Tom Baird, Marian Rogers, Trudy Braun. Photo courtesy of Molly Hill Folken of the Florida Conference.

The participants in the weekend have agreed to serve as members of the Conference's Crisis Response Team: groups of individuals – both clergy and lay – who will volunteer their time to investigate allegations of clergy sexual misconduct should they arise. Certain team members will also be assigned to provide support for both the alleged victim and for the pastor and his/her family, ensuring that no matter what the outcome of the investigation, all parties – including the church itself – will be treated with the concern that the church is called to show to all people.

"The Southeast Conference is deeply committed – both pastorally and in a spirit of justice – to addressing matters of sexual misconduct on the part of clergy, and to be present to all who are wounded by such behavior: victims, families and congregations," said Conference Minister Timothy Downs.

In addition to the guidelines for clergy conduct described in the *Manual on Ministry*, the Conference is developing a set of policies and procedures that will affirm standards for professional behavior, especially where women and children – the most frequent victims of clergy abuse – are concerned.

The Southeast Conference Crisis Response Team represents the culmination of several years of work by Rev. Holly Nelson of Nashville and Rev. James Myers of Birmingham. Rev. Dorothy Gager, also of Nashville, will serve as Crisis Response Coordinator for the Conference.

Conference Notes

The Christian Education Commission would like to increase the sharing of good ideas from CE programs around the conference. Are you enjoying a particular curriculum series? Have you found a source for extra teaching resources? What education activities do you have outside of Sunday morning? We'd love to hear from you — just contact Ginny Nixon through the Conference office, leaving your name, number and the best time to call.

The Conference is looking for a volunteer to serve as **Resource Librarian**, managing the Atlanta-based Conference Resource Center, a library of materials, curriculum, new books from Pilgrim Press, videos and more. Materials are loaned out to Conference churches on a mail-lending basis, and the Resource Librarian would need to commit four to eight hours each month maintaining the Center's lending activity. If you're interested, or know someone who might be, call the Conference Office for more information.

The Massachusetts and Connecticut conferences are looking for stories of connections to their states: teachers, clergy and others, particularly from AMA-related organizations. If you know of a story with a MA/CT connection, call the Conference Office.

The 1998 Southeast Women's Retreat will be held November 20-22 at Shocco Springs Conference Center in Talladega, Alabama. The Planning Committee is developing a weekend filled with varied opportunities focusing on the local church, social justice, personal and spiritual development. Under the theme, God's Amistad — An Invitation to the Table, the retreat will emphasize the importance of gathering around God's table, where friendship and love are priorities. Joyce Hollyday will be the keynote speaker. Mark your calendar for this celebration!

August Physicians Fellowship is being established. If you're a physician and are interested in connecting with others in the church, please send your name, address, phone(s), fax and e-mail addresses to the Conference office.

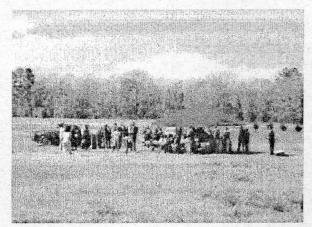
The Interfaith Gathering on Health Care will be held in Memphis, May 3-5. If you're interested in attending, call the Conference office for details.

Rebuilding Burned Churches

In the early spring of 1997, Oak Grove CME Church in Perry,

Georgia, was burned by arsonists.

For three months, the United Church of Christ had been working in partnership with the Congress for National Black Churches (CNBC), organizing a joint effort to rebuild Oak Grove. Delay followed delay – caused largely by unseasonably wet weather – but in mid-March, construction finally began. The United Church of Christ's first crew, from Pleasant Hill Community, began work the last week of March, joined by a faithful crew from the York Pennsylvania Association. Their first task: studding the building.



March 1, 1998 — Members of Oak Grove CME Church gather for a groundbreaking ceremony at their new building site on Elko Road. The site sits atop a green hill, with a commanding view of surrounding farms.

Crews originally scheduled to work on the Oak Grove rebuilding project in early January detoured to Birmingham, Alabama, where they worked on the Avenue M Church of God in Christ. Avenue M was burned along with a house next door. The arson caused the neighborhood to change many older residents left out of fear. By helping to rebuild this church, our crews are

helping the neighborhood regain its stability. Rev. Rodney Franklin and First Congregational Church UCC of Birmingham graciously

housed these unexpected helpers.

A few weeks are still open for crews who would like to work either at Avenue M in Birmingham or at Oak Grove in Perry, Georgia. If you have a group that's interested, call Anne Ariail at 912/742 4151 for more information.

— Anne Ariail Disaster Relief Coordinator

An International Feast of Hope



Recently, several "great hours of sharing" took place when Rev. Eric Gass of the United Church Board for World Ministries paid a visit to the Southeast Conference. Rev. Gass, the Area Executive for the Southern Asia Office of UCBWM, came to remind us of the great work we are all involved in through our giving to One Great Hour of Sharing and the work of our overseas missionaries and partner churches.

The weekend of March 14-15, Eric toured several Southeast churches, meeting with members, showing slides and videos of the UCBWM's work, and sharing stories of hope from around the world: overcoming illiteracy in India, ministering to refugees in Thailand, feeding the hungry in Korea, and more. Well-fed with warm hospitality and good home-cooking, Eric gave us something more: an international feast of faith and hope!

- Rev. John Gill

Conference Office: 800/807 1993

FRIDAY		OWNOSAWIS	OD RETREAT CENTER		
6:00p — 10:00p	Registration		ted in Norcross, Georgia, in a tran-		
6:00p — 7:00p	Dinner	anil wooded setting	quil, wooded setting just north of Atlanta. Each room		
7:30p — 8:00p	Hymn Sing & Meditation	has two double beds,	one chair bed, a private bath and		
8:00p — 8:15p	Nominating Committee Report	air conditioning. At S	Simpsonwood, rooms do not have		
8:15p — 9:00p	Hearings*	televisions or phones	es in the rooms, but both are lo		
9:00p — 10:00p	Fellowship	cated in the hallways a mitted in any building	and lounges. Smoking is not per-		
SATURDAY		milied in any bunding	5.		
7:00a — 8:00a	Breakfast	Room and Meal Pa	ackanes		
8:30a — 9:30a	Worship with Keynoter		entire Annual Meeting, from Fri		
9:30a — 12:00	Business Session	day dinner through S	Sunday lunch. Registration mus		
12:00 — 1:00p	Lunch	be mailed by May 9 f	for the reduced rate (and for you		
1:30p — 2:45p	Workshops – Session A	choice of accommoda	ation).		
3:00p — 4:15p	Workshops – Session B	Double Room	\$170 per person		
4:15p — 6:00p	Personal Time	Child (ages 3-8)	\$30 per child in parent's room		
6:00p — 7:00p	Dinner	Youth (ages 12-18)	\$60 per youth (4-6 per room)		
7:30p — 8:00p	Recognitions, Special Music	Maria and mosting	mest amon (avel breakfast)		
9:00p — 10:00p SUNDAY	Ice Cream Social	Saturday only	\$55/person (excl. breakfast) \$30/person (two meals) the same for children and adults		
7:00a — 8:00a	Breakfast				
8:00a — 10:00a	Personal Time	Handicapped accom	amodations are available (limited		
8:45a — 9:30a	Choir Rehearsal				
10:00a —11:30a	Worship and Installations				
12:00	Lunch				
	ssions, Restructure, Resolutions, Youth				
Buuget, Commis	Sions, Restructure, Resolutions,				
NAME					
ADDRESS/CITY/STATE					
PHONES (DAY/EVE)					
	ME)				
CHURCH LCITY & NAT					
	□ Delegate □ Youth □ Clergy	C. C. C. Deard of	Directors		

☐ Saturday only ☐ Meals/meeting only TYPE OF ROOM DESIRED ☐ Double Double \$170/pp ☐ I'm sharing a room with Meals only \$55/pp ☐ Please assign me a roommate Saturday only \$30/pp ☐ Youth (4-6 youth per loft room) ☐ Children (Number) ☐ I will need child care for the Saturday morning and afternoon sessions CHILD CARE **PAYMENT INFORMATION** Make checks payable to Southeast Conference UCC- Annual Meeting. Mail to 756 W. Peachtree St., Atlanta GA 30308 Total amount due for this reservation ☐ This reservation is part of a group check. Group name ☐ Check enclosed Offsite accommodations are available at the Marriott Hotel in Norcross. Call 770/263 8558 by May 28 for reservations. Smoking rooms are available at this hotel, and the rate per room is \$58/night (plus 12% tax) for single or double occupancy. Please complete a separate form for each person attending all or part of the Annual Meeting

Directions to Simpsonwood Retreat Center

From 1-285 in Atlanta

On the northeast side of Atlanta, take **Exit** #23B (Peachtree Industrial Blvd. North), and continue north 3.7 miles. At **Highway 141**, exit left (sign will read Hwy. 141 to 400 Cumming and Dahlonega). Hwy. 141 is also called Peachtree Parkway.

Go 2.8 miles north on Hwy. 141, then turn left on **E. Jones Bridge Road** (a BP station is an the right)

on the right).

Go 1.4 miles on E. Jones Bridge, and turn left on **Jones Bridge Circle** (Simpson Elementary is on the right – you'll be in a neighborhood area).

After 1.2 miles on Jones Bridge Circle, the entrance to **Simpsonwood Retreat Center** will appear on your right. Follow the signs to Rollins Center and parking.

Shortcut from Greenville

From I-85 South, exit right at **Georgia Exit** #40 (near Atlanta). Turn right onto **Pleasant Hill Road**. Once you've passed Gwinnett Mall on your right, travel 6.3 miles west to **Medlock Bridge Road** (Hwy. 141) and turn left at the traffic light.

Travel 2.9 miles south on Medlock Bridge and turn right onto **E. Jones Bridge Road**.

Go 1.4 miles on E. Jones Bridge, and turn left on **Jones Bridge Circle** (Simpson Elementary is on the right – you'll be in a neighborhood area).

After 1.2 miles on Jones Bridge Circle, the entrance to **Simpsonwood Retreat Center** will appear on your right. Follow the signs to Rollins Center and parking.

Clip and save these directions — the Annual Meeting schedule of events is on the reverse

1998 OCWM Contributions to date

as of March 31, 1998

Alabama — Tennessee Association

United Church of Huntsville	1,950.
Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC	4,758.
Nashville, Howard Congregational UCC	100.
Nashville, First United Church of Christ	1250.
Montgomery, Community Congregational UCC	2,850.
Garden City Congregational Christian	125.
Fairfield Glade Community Church	950.
Deer Lodge Congregational UCC	300.
Crossville, United Christian Church UCWF	150.
Crossville, Grace Community UCC	600.
Chattanooga, Pilgrim Congregational UCC	2,496.
Birmingham, Pilgrim Congregational UCC	1,626.
Birmingham, First Congregational	\$ 2,500.

South Alabama - Northwest Florida Association

Brantley, Liberty Congregational	\$ 100.	
TOTAL SAL-NWFL	\$ 100.	

Georgia — South Carolina Association

TOTAL GA-SC	
Marietta, Pilgrimage UCC	1,900.
Charleston, Circular Congregational UCC	1,000.
Jonesboro/Hampton, Trinity UCC	240.
Atlanta, Central Congregational UCC	\$ 7,900.
Atlanta, Rush Memorial Congregational UCC	108.

Lanett Congregational Christian UCC Pine Mountain, Oak Grove Congreg. Christian Roanoke, New Hope Congregational Christian Roanoke, North Main Congregational Christian Wadley, Corinth Christian Woodbury, Jones Chapel United Congreg. Chr. \$ 620. 1,140. 570. 190. 622.

TOTAL EAL-WGA	\$ 3,261.

Stewards: Called as Partners

The Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference



June 12-14 Simpsonwood Conference Center Atlanta, Georgia

W

Partners Across the Globe

with John Gill
The work of the United Church Board
for World Ministries

Partners Across the Nation

presenter to be announced
The work of the United Church Board
for Homeland Ministries

Strengthen Your Congregation

with Barbara Everett Strengthening your congregation through planned and special giving

Protecting Your Church

Marie Loutoo
Save money and promote mission
through the UCC Insurance Board

Consecrating Stewards

with Tim Morrison
Strengthening your church in
stewardship through this program

Clergy, Money and Faith

with William Green Engaging a challenging issue, a challenging conversation

The Widows' Might

with Joyce Hollyday
Discover the spiritual power of simplicity
and giving

Doing Theology

with Dick Sales
Previewing an extensive education
program for licensed ministers

Renew Your Church!

with John Mingus
Find out about participating in the
Covenant for Renewal

Becoming Open & Affirming

with Robert Goodyear
How your church can become an Open
& Affirming congregation

Affirming Faith

Henry Hobson Learn how new confirmation materials introduce teens and adults to the UCC

The Cornerstone Fund of the UCC

with Cheri Lovell Investing from the heart, Building for the future

Additional workshops will be available

Board Highlights

The Board of Directors of the Southeast Conference met on January 9, and took the following actions:

 Received with regret the resignations of Nancy Donny and Dan Rosemergy from Board membership

 Elected Budd Friend-Jones to the Chair of the Commission on Church and Ministry, and Milton Hurst to the Chair of the Commission on Church Development and Evangelism

 Appointed Arthur Domby of Atlanta as Conference attorney

• Authorized establishment of a Scholarship Committee

 Increased the Conference contribution to National OCWM to a total of \$20,000 for 1998

 Acted to transfer \$5,000 from the Visions '91 Campaign, plus up to \$2,000 from the remaining balance at the end of 1998, to the work of the Allen Retreat Center

 Received a report that the Conference is working with the Board for Homeland Ministries to explore the feasibility of an African-American church start in Atlanta

 Received a report that no more funding is being provided to Covenant Church in Columbia, SC

SUBMITTING RESOLUTIONS

Proposed resolutions to be considered by the Board of Directors for the Annual Meeting may be submitted *in writing* to the Conference Office, to the attention of Tim Downs and Annie Neal.

Deadline for receipt: May 1

DISPLAY YOUR WARES

Have crafts, books, bumper stickers or buttons you'd like to display or sell at the Annual Meeting? Space is available for "boutique" and informational tables – just call Gerry Hudson in the Conference Office to request a reservation.

CONFERENCE OFFICE 800/807 1993

Nominating Report

The following individuals have been nominated to the Board of Directors of the Southeast Conference. Officers will be elected at the Annual Meeting.

Moderator	Donald Harmon		EAL-WGA
VICE MODERATOR	Steve Parker		GA-SC
SECRETARY	Don Hewett		ALA-TN
TREASURER	Dave Speno		GA-SC
PAST MODERATOR	Dr. Annie Neal		ALA-TN
At Large	Kimberly Hunt	'00	ALA-TN
	TBA	'00	
Commission on			
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION	Kristi Denham	'00	GA-SC
CHURCH DEV. & EVANG.	Pat Kask	'00	GA-SC
CHURCH & MINISTRY	Marian Rogers	'00	ALA-TN
SOCIAL JUSTICE	Carol Jean Miller	'00	GA-SC
STEWARDSHIP & OCWM	Marvin Mangham	'00	GA-SC
Women in Church & Soc.	Kathryn Robinson		GA-SC

1997 Financial Report

1997 was a year in which the Southeast Conference was blessed by increased income from churches, associations, interest income, and support from the Board for Homeland Ministries. Overall income was up over 1996 by \$20,685. Income exceeded expenses by \$9,062. Expenses increased over 1996 by \$12,845 which included increased giving to National OCWM of \$17,500 versus \$15,000 in 1996, and the addition of two Conference Associates and their related expenses.

During 1997 the Conference updated its computer and telephone systems, added the monthly *Southeast Perspective*, and reorganized the *Southeast News*. These efforts are all intended to bring the staff and resources of the Southeast Conference closer to you. Two committees have been formed, the Scholarship Committee and the Grants Committee, to distribute funds for educational purposes and grants from Visions '91 and the Make A Difference campaigns.

The Finance Committee will be presenting to you at the Annual Meeting a revised 1998 and proposed 1999 budget. These budgets will be more in line with the actual figures that have occurred over the past three years. This change we hope will make the budget process more realistic so when the Conference requests increases they will more nearly track actual numbers. A more complete and detailed review of 1997 and the revised and proposed budgets will be in a special annual report you will be receiving prior to the Annual Meeting in June. The Finance Committee has worked hard this past year and looks forward to a rewarding 1998 for the Southeast Conference.

— David P. Speno Chair

A Movie, an Event, a Part of Our Heritage

Reflections on the Amistad

The Academy Award nominations largely ignored Steven Spielberg's *Amistad*, but that doesn't mean you should. This movie is beautiful to watch (it did get nominations for cinematography, costume, and dramatic musical score), and it tells the story of an event that was influential in the development of the mission and abolitionist commitment of the 19th century Congregational church.

The movie follows closely the actual events surrounding the African captives, members of the Mendi tribe, who rebelled against brutal treatment, were imprisoned for nearly two years while the American courts decided their fate, then returned to Africa as free persons. What the movie does not present is the critical role played by committed church people who gave of themselves to oppose one of the inhuman byproducts of the system of slavery, the slave trade. The brief scene of persons praying in the snow is an injustice to the countless people who added hard work and financial resources to their prayers to make sure that these Africans would not languish forgotten in their New

England jail.

Before the story of the Mendi captives personalized the atrocities that were a part of the institution of slavery, abolition was a vaguely held belief by many, but a cause for only a few. After the jailing of the Mendi, the Amistad Committee formed to support their defense and to provide physical and moral support for the captives. This committee was supported by the churches in the area, including one congregation of free blacks. As the case dragged on, more and more people came to realize that the only way to stop injustices like this one was to abolish slavery altogether. After the Supreme Court freed the Mendi prisoners, it was the Amistad Committee that continued to raise funds to buy passage for their return to Africa.

Within a few years, the Amistad Committee joined with three other groups to form the American Missionary Association, a group dedicated to spreading

the message of God's love to all parts of the world. After the Civil War, the AMA founded dozens of educational institutions in the South, including the historically black colleges of which we in the Southeast Conference are so proud. And it was the AMA and people educated by AMA schools that founded many of our churches in the Southeast. As we move into the 21st century, the AMA continues to work within our Board for Homeland Ministries for love, justice and human freedom in God's world.

In 1939, 100 years after the revolt on the Amistad, murals depicting the incident were created in the library of Talledega College, an AMA school in Talledega, Alabama. These powerful paintings, created when blacks were still consigned by Jim Crow laws to second class citizenship, are worth a visit to this town near Birmingham.

Again, I highly recommend the movie *Amistad*. It is well acted, and it honors the courage, dignity and patience of the Mendi captives as well as the commitment of their defenders. But I also recommend the United Church Press video, *I Remember the Amistad*, produced on the 150th anniversary of the incident and available at the Conference Office. This film provides the added dimension of the importance of the commitment of the organized church in achieving justice.

With the violence of the first part of the movie, *Amistad* is rated R. While every United Church youth should know this heroic story and our church's role in supporting the captives, families will want to determine how much of the movie is appropriate for their teens.

-Ginny Nixon

The Nigerian Resolution

At the 1997 General Synod, a resolution passed calling on the United States to boycott Nigerian oil – many of us wondered why. Over the weekend of March 13-15, a group of us learned the answer.

In 1993, Nigeria held long-awaited general elections – but while Chief Abiola clearly won, the ruling military leader General Abacha declared the election null and void. When Abiola objected, he was jailed – and he remains imprisoned to this day. His wife was killed for calling for his release, and hundreds of people from the Nigerian delta have been detained.

Why? For those who remember Angola, the answer is familiar: Shell Oil. Shell has devastated the delta of Nigeria with oil wells and flame-outs. And part of its profits go into the

pockets of General Abacha.

The Nigerian poet, Ken Saro-Wiwa, was executed for demanding the rights of the delta people, along with eight other Ngoni activists. Environmental degradation wrought not only by Shell, but also by Mobil and Chevron (though to a lesser degree), has tranformed the delta from a place of great life and harvests to a dismal swamp.

Detention without trial, trials without juries, military murders – we have all heard this before. But it was South Africa, gold and diamonds. Now it is happening daily in Nigeria, the most

populous nation in Africa.

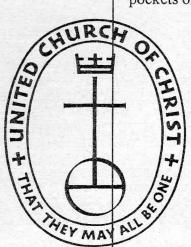
At our Annual Meeting in June, we will ask you to adopt a Nigerian detainee. Every letter you send on behalf of your detainee will be for one purpose: sanctions in lieu of free elections.

This black-on-black violence is no less horrific than what occurred in South Africa during apartheid. The very land of Nigeria cries out for justice.

> — Dick Sales Conference Associate

News from the Marshall Islands

Jan and Karl Whiteman, our missionaries in the Pacific Islands, survived a typhoon that hit their area several months ago – though without power and water for a number of days, they came through with very little damage. The Theological College of the Marshall Islands sustained significant damage, but thanks to a \$4,000 gift from One Great Hour of Sharing, repair began soon after the storm had passed. The Whitemans love to hear from folks in the Southeast. Their e-mail address is kwjwucc@ntamar.com.



St. John's United Church of Christ, Cullman AL MAY 3 - that our witness may be strong for truth The American Missionary Association **MAY 10** - thanks be to God for the AMA and the churches founded by that great institution First Congregational Church, Montgomery AL **MAY 17** - rebuilding from the ashes Pilgrimage United Church of Christ, Marietta GA **MAY 24** - enriching worship and service Our missionaries Jan & Karl Whiteman **MAY 31** and their ministries in the Marshall Island The Southeast Conference Annual Meeting JUNE 7 - preparations and planning for next weekend JUNE 14 Southeast Conference pastors - those leading services at home during the Annual Meeting Churches in the Southeast Conference JUNE 21 with membership under 50 members Midway Congregational, First Congregational in Savannah, Plymouth JUNE 28 Congregational and Circular Congregational in Charleston, Bethany Congregational in Thomasville and Evergreen Congregational in Beachton - that our churches "at the edges" of the Conference may feel part of our fellowship

Annual Meeting Schedule and Information Inside!

Southeast Conference
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United Church of Christ
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